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THE ROLE OF UNEP IN THE 1990s

Report of the Executive Director

Addendum

FUND TARGET FOR 1995

Summary

In its decision SS.II/1, paragraph 2, the Council requested the Executive Director to submit to it at its sixteenth session a detailed report explaining the basis of his recommendations for setting a substantially increased target for annual contributions to the Environment Fund by the year 1995. The present report is submitted to the Council in compliance with that request.

The first part of the report contains background information, including figures relating to the level and status of the Fund. The specific objectives of the Fund, as laid down in the General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) are cited. Finally, the Executive Director lists priority areas for which the increased resources are needed.

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Increase in the Fund Target to $250 million by 1995

1. By its decision 15/1 paragraph V (1), the Governing Council agreed "to set a target of $100 million for contributions to the Environment Fund by the year 1992" and in paragraph V (2) of the same decision, called upon "all Governments to increase their contributions to the Fund by at least 35 per cent per annum from the 1 January 1989 level to enable the target of $100 million to be met by 1992".

2. In his report on Priority Evolving Environmental Issues (UNEP/GCSS.II/2 and Corr. 1 and 2, para. 158) to the second special session of the Governing Council in 1990, the Executive Director suggested that a further target $250 million should be set for 1995. In response, the Governing Council, in its decision SS.II/1, requested the Executive Director "to prepare for submission to the Council at its sixteenth session a detailed report explaining the basis of his recommendations for setting a substantially increased target for annual contributions to the Environment Fund by the year 1995".

3. Contributions in 1990 are expected to reach a level of $52.1 million, some 33.0 per cent higher than the level of $39.2 million for 1989. Given the difficulties that some Governments have in revising national budget allocations at short notice, this outcome can be regarded as satisfactory and more or less on target. It should be recognized, however, that currency factors contributed to the achievement of the 1990 total and that currency factors can have an opposite impact in other years. In order to reach the trend line figure for the $100 million target by 1992, $73 million would need to be contributed in 1991. At the sixteenth session of the Council in May 1991, the Executive Director will report on the status of pledges for 1991 and evaluate the potential for achieving the 1991 target.

4. During the second special session of the Governing Council, particularly during the discussion on evolving environmental issues, it became abundantly clear that the majority of Governments looked forward to a strengthening of UNEP and to an intensification of major parts of its programme of activities. It must therefore be emphasized that the target of $250 million should be seen as additional resources badly needed to help UNEP carry out its catalytic role in tackling environmental problems through the United Nations system and other institutions. Throughout the decade 1979 to 1988, contributions to the Fund had stagnated in dollars of the day and fallen in real terms. As a result, the Environment Fund only fulfilled in part the role for which it was established in 1972 by the General Assembly in its resolution 2997 (XXVII), section III:

> "3. Decides that the Environment Fund shall be used for financing such programmes of general interest as regional and global monitoring, assessment and data-collecting systems, including, as appropriate, costs for national counterparts; the improvement of environmental quality management; environmental research; information exchange and dissemination; public education and training; assistance for national, regional and global environmental institutions; the promotion of environmental research and studies for the development of industrial and other technologies best suited to a policy of economic growth compatible with adequate environmental safeguards; and such other programmes as the

Governing Council may decide upon, and that in the implementation of such programmes due account should be taken of the special needs of the developing countries;

"4. Decides that, in order to ensure that the development priorities of developing countries shall not be adversely affected, adequate measures shall be taken to provide additional financial resources on terms compatible with the economic situation of the recipient developing country, and that, to this end, the Executive Director, in co-operation with competent organizations, shall keep this problem under continuing review;

"5. Decides that the Environment Fund shall be directed to the need for effective co-ordination in the implementation of international environmental programmes of the organizations in the United Nations system and other international organizations."

5. Given the depth of concern now frequently expressed by all Governments regarding the state of the world environment and the need for action to arrest those trends identified as being potentially disastrous for the global environment in the next century, the level of resources now being directed towards the co-ordination of global environmental activities and towards the catalyzing of activities at the national level considered of greatest importance to the global programmes, is lamentably inadequate. If UNEP, together with the rest of the United Nations system, were to tackle all the areas of concern to Governments mentioned in the General Assembly resolution that established UNEP and the areas of concentration singled out by the Council in its decision 15/1, it would require resources far above even the level suggested by the Executive Director for 1995.

6. However, the Executive Director is proposing the $250 million by 1995 to enable UNEP to address the following priority areas of concern:

(a) Climate Studies:

(i) Although there is something close to consensus on the global impact of the greenhouse effect, little is yet known about the regional and country impacts. If action is to be taken to mitigate the impact of global warming on coastal areas, agriculture, desertification, forestry, biodiversity, human settlements, etc., it is urgent that work should be reinforced in all these areas;

(ii) Another major issue in this field is the tremendous variation of views among economists over the actual costs of responding to climatic change. Global studies and country-specific studies, especially in developing countries, need to be launched immediately to address these issues.

(b) Earthwatch:

Although monitoring networks have been established through GEMS covering air pollution, water pollution, desertification and forestry, these networks need to be significantly reinforced, particularly in developing countries. A specific example in this respect is the almost complete lack of stratospheric ozone

monitoring stations in the developing world and the very limited number of stations monitoring the increase in ultra-violet radiations all over the world. At the same time, a radiation monitoring network needs to be established and data validation programmes reinforced systematically for all of the environment monitoring networks so as to raise the quality of data collected to an even level throughout. There is a need to accelerate the availability of data for use by Governments in developing their environment and development policies. This means a substantial strengthening of the GEMS, IRPTC and INFOTERRA networks and focal points if Earthwatch is to carry out the tasks required of it by the General Assembly, namely issuing early warning of environmental deterioration.

(c) Expansion of GRID:

Incorporation of global environmental data into GRID is proceeding steadily and regional centres are being established to do the same for regional data. This work needs to be accelerated and a network of national GRID centres established in conjunction with national institutions, with assistance where necessary for training and hands-on experience of the system and the provision of computer hardware. If the GRID system is to become a truly global network of benefit to all countries, there must be a substantial increase in the resources invested in the system. Resources are needed soon for the collection, collation and distribution of meaningful information on the availability of natural resources, their rates of depletion, contribution to global environmental problems by country and sector, etc.

(d) National Legislation, Institution Building and Training for Developing Countries:

Developing country Governments have made noteworthy efforts to establish their own environment institutions, sometimes with help from UNEP, but mainly through their own efforts. UNEP should be doing much more to help them by way of advice on institution building, assistance in providing model legislation and through the provision of environment monitoring and protection equipment. Developing countries need assistance in establishing early warning systems in conjunction with Earthwatch, as well as assistance in meeting environmental emergencies. Major efforts need to be made to assist them in planning afforestation programmes, national soils and desertification control policies and the planning of protected areas to preserve biological diversity. They need much more substantial assistance in the establishment and operation of laboratories dealing with the monitoring of pollution in their coastal areas, particularly that derived from land-based sources of pollution. Major efforts must be made to support programmes in connection with renewable sources of energy.

(e) Public Information:

It is clear that the general public have been made aware in general of the environmental problems facing the world in the next century. Some of that awareness is, however, imprecise or often not totally believed. Much more must be done to widen and deepen the general public's knowledge of the pr blems the next generation will face and this can only be done by an enlarged programme of public information through all the available media.

(f) New Environmental Initiatives:

Apart from the need for additional resources to reinforce existing programmes to a level at which they can have meaningful impact, a number of new initiatives have been suggested to overcome perceived gaps in the global apparatus established to safeguard the environment. These include: a mechanism for assisting in avoiding environmental conflicts and in resolving them when they occur; a global environmental academy; the establishment of a "green brigade" as a youth volunteer programme; the United Nations Centre for urgent environmental assistance; and an early warning system of environmental risks. If these ideas are to be developed and implemented over the next three to four years, additional resources will be required. A small part of these additional resources should come through an increase in the level of the Environment Fund.

(g) Cleaner Production:

(i) The development and use of cleaner technologies that prevent wastes and other releases at source and use raw materials more efficiently;

(ii) The transfer of such technology to developing countries through pilot schemes.

7. The attainment of the $100 million target for contributions to the Environment Fund by 1992 cannot be regarded as providing the resources necessary to assist with the solution of the environment problems that come within UNEP's co-ordination, catalyzing and technical co-operation mandate. It will merely represent a reversal of the fall in the level of contributions in real terms that occurred through the 1970s and 1980s. If average inflation over that period is considered at an annual rate of only 5 per cent, the contributions actually paid in 1990 were equivalent to only $22.5 million in the prices of 1972 when UNEP was established, i.e. at the level ($20m) envisaged at Stockholm for the Environment Fund ($100m over 5 years). If we assume that inflation continues at the same average rate of 5 per cent, a total of $100 million in 1992 will be equivalent to less than $40 million in 1972 prices, while a total of $250 million by 1995 would be equivalent to only $85.5 million. The Executive Director believes that these figures show clearly that what he is proposing as a target for 1995 would constitute only a limited increase in the capacity of UNEP to render the services required of it, as compared to the services it delivered at its inception nearly 20 years ago. And a limited increase in the capacity of UNEP should be measured in the light of the tremendous increase of demands made on the organization over the ensuing years.

8. The problems facing planet Earth in the new century are only now being perceived and understood. If that understanding is to be deepened, more widely appreciated and action planned and taken to forestall some of the shorter term dangers, many more resources will yet be required. The $250 million target for the Environment Fund for 1995 could be achieved by continuing the annual increase of contributions by the 35 per cent agreed to by the Governing Council in 1989, during the three years 1993, 1994 and 1995. It is now important that the Governing Council take a decision on the target for 1995 in order to define the financial envelope within which the Executive Director should draw up a detailed programme for the biennium 1994-1995.

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Report of the Executive Director

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SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL IN 1992

Summary

The present report is submitted to the Council in compliance with GC decision SS.II/1, para. 1 (b), in which the Executive Director was requested to submit a report to the Council at its sixteenth session, presenting his proposals on a possible special session of the Governing Council in 1992.

First, the background is described, then the justification. Finally, the proposed dates and agenda are given and the financial implications are presented.

SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL IN 1992

1. In its decision SS.II/1, among the items on which the Council requested the Executive Director to report was a "possible special session of the Governing Council in 1992" (para. 1b). As is well known, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) is scheduled to be held in June 1992, 20 years after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm. Given the number of issues requested by the General Assembly for presentation by the Council to the Conference, as well as various other considerations, the Executive Director is proposing that the Council hold a special three to five-day session at the ministerial level in 1992.

2. There are, in fact, three specific issues that need to be considered before they are presented to the 1992 Conference and/or to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session later that year. First, the General Assembly, in its resolution 44/227 of 22 December 1989, requested the Secretary-General to prepare, for submission to the Conference and to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, through the Governing Council, "a new consolidated report on further substantive follow-up to General Assembly resolutions 42/186 and 42/187 by Governments and organizations of the United Nations system". This report is in addition to the progress report requested of the Secretary-General for submission to the forty-sixth session (1991) of the General Assembly, through the Governing Council at its sixteenth session. Thus the General Assembly itself has implied that the Council should meet sometime in 1992, prior to the Conference on Environment and Development to provide its comments on the follow-up of GA resolutions 42/186 and 42/187 to the Conference, as well as to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session in 1992.

3. Second, in its resolution 44/172A (para. 6) on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, the General Assembly invited the Governing Council to contribute substantially to the discussion on desertification at the Conference by undertaking a general evaluation of the progress achieved in implementing the Plan of Action. The Council itself has also requested a report on the status of the Plan of Action. Additionally, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, with the assistance of the Executive Director, to prepare a series of studies on financing the Plan of Action, studies which are to be submitted to the 1992 Conference. Immediately after the adoption of the resolution (19 December 1989) the UNEP secretariat embarked upon the task of preparing a consolidated report covering all these issues for consideration by the Council before presentation to the Conference directly or through the Secretary-General. This report is unlikely to be completed until the end of 1991 or early 1992, well after the sixteenth session of the Governing Council. If the Governing Council is to respond to the invitation of the General Assembly in this regard, a special session would have to be convened prior to the Conference.

4. Furthermore, the Governing Council in its decision 15/13A on the 1988, 1989 and 1990 state-of-the-environment reports, requested the Executive Director to prepare for presentation to UNCED a brief analytical report on changes in the state of the world environment since 1972. The General Assembly subsequently enlarged upon this theme by deciding (GA res 44/228, I, para. 15a) that the Conference should examine, inter alia, the state of the

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environment and changes that have occurred since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in 1972, i.e. a 20-year state-of-the-environment report. The Executive Director will be submitting a progress report on the preparation of this report to the Governing Council at its sixteenth session, but the synthesis version is unlikely to be ready before the end of 1991, i.e. more than six months after that session. The comprehensive 20-year state-of-the-environment report itself is not likely to be ready by the time of the Conference itself. The Executive Director feels strongly that the Council should consider and comment on the synthesis report before it goes to the Conference.

5. In summary, the Executive Director proposes that the Governing Council hold a three to five-day special session at the ministerial level during the first week of February 1992. This would allow the Council to present its report on desertification and its views on the Executive Director's state-of-the-environment report to the Preparatory Committee before they are presented to the Conference itself. The session could deal with the following provisional agenda in plenary meetings:

1. Opening of the session;

2. Adoption of the agenda;

3. Credentials of representatives;

4. Consideration of the synthesis state-of-the environment report to be presented to the Conference on Environment and Development;

5. Consideration of the Secretary-General's consolidated report on further substantive follow-up to General Assembly resolutions 42/186 and 42/187;

6. Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and its financing;

7. Other issues that need to be brought to the attention of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

8. Other business;

9. Adoption of the report;

10. Closure of the session.

6. The financial implications of holding a special three to five-day session in Nairobi in 1992 would amount to approximately $950,000.